

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!

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WALL ST. GREED IS CAPITALISM

Only socialism can guarantee jobs, housing, health care, equality

By Fred Goldstein

The latest trillion-dollar handout to Wall Street banks and the recent assault on workers in the auto industry clearly demonstrate why the workers and oppressed in this country must break the chains of capitalist priorities and mobilize to change things around so that workers come before banks and corporations.

Ultimately, the fight is to do away with the profit system and replace it with a socialist reorganization of society—a society based on human need, not corporate greed.

The Obama administration has given the auto bosses an ultimatum: voluntarily downsize and force further concessions from the workers or have the cuts imposed in a bankruptcy court.

Detroit auto barons have laid off 100,000 workers since 2006, established a two-tier wage system in which the pay for new hires was cut in half, eliminated the jobs bank, and got the UAW to shoulder health care costs of the workers. Yet the Treasury and Wall Street wanted more blood in return for the bailout.

General Motors submitted a plan promising to cut 47,000 workers worldwide and shut down five more plants. Chrysler agreed to lay off 3,000 workers. Both companies strong-armed the UAW into agreeing to future wage concessions and health care concessions. Yet Washington rejected these plans as inadequate.

Washington, the banks and the bondholders of the auto companies want to go after the health care benefits of hundreds of thousands of retirees, in addition to breaking the contract on wages. They are demanding that the UAW agree to non-union wage levels at Toyota, Nissan and Honda, among others.

Above all, the government is demanding that the auto industry shrink itself down—meaning cut jobs on a grand scale.

The auto industry is central to U.S. capitalism. It absorbs enormous amounts of capital. For every worker directly employed in the auto industry, anywhere from seven to 10 additional workers are employed in the economy. Autos use steel, other metals, computers, rubber, plastic, glass, wire. Producing a vehicle involves parts plants, auto dealers, truck drivers. The auto industry is one of the largest television and print advertisers and the largest purchaser of...

Continued on page 8

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Youth say: We deserve a better system

By LeiLani Dowell

What are some reactions of youth to the global economic crisis?

Michael Steinman, a teacher at Village Academy High School in Pomona, Calif., recently asked his students how they were being affected by the economic crisis. Their responses—filled with grief and worry—led to the creation of a video interview, produced by Steinman and the students and featured at youtube.com.

Student Yvonne Bojorquez said: “We’ve all been affected by this economic crisis. I mean, we’re all college-bound students, right? But the way things are going, we’re not gonna be able to make it.”

Evelyn Aguilar described her situation: “We lived in a home for three years, and we lost it about, almost a year ago. It was the first ‘American Dream’ my parents could have accomplished, but they did not know interest would rise. ... So we moved with our aunt. There are currently 12 of us in a one-room house.”

In tears, Jennifer said: “It makes me really mad because the people we trusted the most with all our money and with everything ended up making things worse for us. So I can’t imagine what’s gonna happen for our generation.”

BBC News received similar responses of despair when it interviewed students from three different countries on the eve of the London summit of the G20—The Group of Twenty finance ministers and central bank governors.

In Mbabane, Swaziland, students said: “Maybe we will have to tone down our dreams. A lot of people are losing their jobs.” Others in Glasgow, Scotland, said: “We have seen our parents struggle to keep up with their household bills and pay for fuel. Those of us whose families are among the two million unemployed are finding it especially difficult to cope.”

In Islamabad, Pakistan, students told the

Continued on page 7



**FULFILLING
KING'S DREAM**
Jobs! Jobs! Jobs! 3

IMAGINE \$10 TRILLION

A guide for meeting
human needs

7


MAY DAY RALLY
Friday **MAY 1st** 2009

UNION SQUARE Assemble 12 Noon

14th Street & Broadway, Manhattan

Music and Performances 4 pm

March to 26 Federal Plaza around 5:30 pm

Yes to
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PRO-WORKER
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NO to: RAIDS
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FORCED MIGRATION
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FORECLOSURES & BANK BAILOUTS

May Day Rally initiated by the May 1st Coalition for Worker & Immigrant Rights. Meetings held every 3rd Tuesday of the month at the Solidarity Center, 55 West 17th St, 5th Fl., between 5th & 6th Ave. To endorse and get involved call 212.561.1744 or visit www.may1.info or email may1@leftshift.org.

PEOPLE'S SUMMIT

June 14-17 in Detroit

4

OAKLAND SHOOTINGS

Behind the headlines

2

Issues behind the Oakland shootings

By Larry Hales

On March 21, Lovelle Mixon, a young Black man, was pulled over by two motorcycle cops in Oakland, Calif. According to the Oakland Police Department, the stop was “routine” and was for a “traffic violation.” Other than that the details of the stop remain shady. But such routine stops involving racial profiling occur frequently in oppressed communities.

Mixon placed a call to his uncle from a cell phone. According to the uncle, Curtis Mixon, “He was saying that they were talking on the radio, that they were probably calling for backup, you know how they do. ... Then he said he had to go.” (New York Times)

After the phone call, Lovelle Mixon apparently shot the cops and fled on foot to an apartment complex. According to reports, Mixon hid out in a closet, and as SWAT police entered the apartment he was in and the room in which he was hiding, he then exchanged gunfire with the cops, hitting three, two fatally, and was himself shot dead.

Since then, the police have made numerous claims against Mixon, including that he was tied to a rape or several rapes, a homicide, and that he entered into the sex trade as a pimp, the latter charge supposedly confirmed by a cousin. Of Mixon’s choice to be a pimp, “That’s not something he wanted to stay in,” his cousin said, “but he couldn’t find anything else to pay the bills.” (New York Times)

This commentary is not an attempt to defend his choice to be a pimp, if it is true, or any sexual assault. It is a usual course of police departments to defend their actions and the actions of the state apparatus as a whole by further demonizing victims of police brutality or anyone who is alleged to have fought back against cops.

The final months of Lovelle Mixon’s life must be placed within the context not only of the specific conditions of Oakland, Calif., and the fact of national oppression but also of a deepening crisis of the capitalist system and its disproportionate effects on oppressed communities.

The Los Angeles Times published a timeline of the last months of Mixon’s life, following his release from the California Correctional Center in Susanville.

Mixon served five years in prison before being released in October of 2007 and securing a job as a janitor. He made his parole visits but was remanded back to prison for nine months. According to family, he was willing to

go back, because once released he would get a different parole officer, as he felt the one he had was abusive and demeaning.

When he was released in November, he moved back home to live with family members and started seeing his new parole officer, submitting to visits and looking for a job.

A New York Times article reports that Mixon’s grandmother revealed his problems with his parole officer—that the officer would make him wait for hours, stand him up, belittle him and threaten to revoke his parole a second time.

Ultimately not able to find a job, Mixon felt forced to resort to other means. According to a 2003 report by the California Research Bureau, the unemployment rate of parolees recently released was 70-80 percent and many of the prisoners in California were remanded back to prison because of the strict zero-tolerance policy that governs parolees in the state.

Beyond that, though, beyond the politics regarding parolees and the prices they must pay for drug counseling and other classes that people released on parole are made to pay for as a condition of parole, stands institutionalized racism and the national question.

It is well documented that the U.S. has the world’s largest prison system. In fact, the total number of people in prison, jails, on parole or probation is 7.3 million, with 2.3 million in prison. Fifty percent or more of the prison population is Black. California, with 170,000 prisoners, has one of the largest prison populations in the world.

And in every city across the U.S. police brutality is rampant. Oakland, one of the poorest cities in California, with a rich history of struggle, has seen a number of police killings of people of color by police. The most recent killing was of Oscar Grant III, who was executed by a Bay Area Rapid Transit cop, Johannes Mehserle, while he lay face down on a subway platform.

In 2008 Casper Banjo, a 71-year-old Black artist, was shot by a cop at a shopping mall. The people of Oakland have suffered through intimidation, martial law, occupation and generally being terrorized by the police; therefore, Lovelle was justified in defending himself from occupying cops just as resistance fighters in Iraq are justified in defending themselves against an occupying army.

Also killed in 2008 were six others, including Jody Woodfox and 15-year-old José Luis Buenrostro. The year before, Gary King Jr. was brutally beaten, tased and shot in the back by Oakland Police Department cop Patrick Gonzales.

This was and is the atmosphere that led to the four cops being shot, and it could happen at anytime, as long as the racist conditions lead to blinding poverty, mass incarceration and oppression and repression for people of color at the hands of the police.

Lovelle Mixon was not a cold-blooded monster acting out of rage that was unwarranted, but another example of a young Black man with the weight of centuries of oppression bearing down upon him who had few chances to secure better opportunities for himself.

He is a victim and casualty of the racist U.S. capitalist system and the cops are merely armed protectors of that system who wage a constant war against the poor and oppressed every day. □



★ In the U.S.	
Wall Street greed IS capitalism	1
Youth say: We deserve a better system	1
Issues behind the Oakland shootings	2
Marching on Wall St. to fulfill King’s dream	3
Dr. King’s legacy of struggle lives on today	3
Detroit People’s Summit	4
UNC students, workers fight cutbacks.	4
Low-wage workers need EFCA	4
Solidarity day for Moncure workers	5
The latest twist in the Mumia case	5
On the picket line	5
Economic crisis is bad for women.	6
Why the current crisis isn’t going away.	6
Progressive Filipinos in U.S. organize	6
What could be done with \$10 TRILLION.	7
Peoples assembly for social justice	8
MLB’s Magglio Ordóñez supports Chavez	9
Florida protest: ‘No war’	9

★ Around the world	
Crisis centered in U.S. hits Latin America	9
George Galloway on convoy to Palestine	10
Conference on racism	10
Rally in Belgrade marks NATO bombing	11
Anti-militarist opponents cheer Czech PM’s ouster	11
Afghanistan: U.S. expands war	11

★ Editorials	
What’s next? May Day.	10

★ Noticias En Español	
Cuba cambia	12
China y India	12

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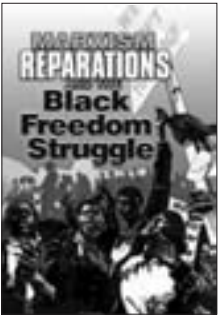
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Marching on Wall St. to fulfill King’s dream: A JOBS PROGRAM

By Charles Barron and Chris Silvera

We will be amongst the many speakers at the “Bail Out People, Not Banks” rally on Wall Street on April 3. Just a few hours before the Wall Street rally, the Bureau of Labor Statistics is going to announce that another two-thirds of a million workers got laid off in March. That is one of the reasons why we intend to use the time allotted us to speak, to call for the creation of a massive jobs program. We are going to call it the “Fulfill King’s Dream Jobs Program” in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

We have four reasons for associating King’s name with the jobs program. The first reason is that April 4 will mark the 41st anniversary of Dr. King’s martyrdom. The second reason is that King devoted the final months of his life to launching a movement for the right of all to either a job or an income.

King saw the struggle for the right to a job or an income as nothing less than the second phase of the civil rights movement. Securing a job at a living wage for all was the central demand of the Poor People’s Campaign that King initiated in late 1967.

The third reason is that at no other time in our lifetime has the need for the massive jobs program that King dreamed about been more urgently needed. Depression-level layoffs and home foreclosures are populating new tent cities from coast to coast. Whole families are living under bridges and in parks on the outskirts of cities.

The real unemployment rate, if you count those who want full-time jobs but can only find part-time or temporary work, is upwards of 15 percent. Everyone from the World Bank to the National Urban League says that the jobless rate is only going to get worse.

The latest “State of Black America” report issued by the National Urban League confirms what everyone already knows. While very few, regardless of race

and gender, are not harmed or threatened by the biggest worldwide economic collapse since the 1930s, it is the Black and Latino/a communities that are the most devastated by the crisis, especially Black and Latino/a youth. Jail is not the jobs program for young people that King dreamed about. It was his and should be our worst nightmare.

The unemployment crisis demands a real jobs program, something equal to the size and scope of the Work Projects Administration created by Congress in 1935 to put millions of jobless people to work.

In its first year the WPA created more than 3.4 million jobs (the equivalent of about 10 million jobs today). Under the WPA, workers were paid the prevailing wage in the industry or vocation they worked in.

The stimulus legislation passed by Congress in February may help ease the suffering of some, but it’s not going to reverse or even halt the soaring jobless rate. There is no jobs program currently in effect or even under serious consideration by the government that comes even close to the seriousness and size of the WPA.

Where do we get the money for such a jobs program? When the government is prepared to pump trillions of dollars into the banking system, the question is not where will the money come from but rather what need should it be devoted to. The 200 billion dollars that the government has given AIG alone could have created anywhere between three to four million jobs paying a living wage.

There is another important point that makes the WPA jobs program relevant to today’s crisis. The WPA should have started at an earlier stage of the U.S. and global depression 75 years ago. However, the government delayed putting a serious jobs program in place until it was painfully



Charles Barron, Brenda Stokely, Larry Holmes & Elombe Brath, Harlem 2005 rally. Above, Chris Silvera.

clear that waiting for the banks to be fixed as the basis for putting the jobless back to work was a huge mistake. We must not make the same mistake again.

We don’t think King believed that meeting the needs of the poor and the unemployed must be contingent upon the solvency of JPMorgan Chase, Citicorp, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Goldman Sachs, etc., or the power of these big banks to turn the economy on and off depending on what makes them richer.

The belief that until the banks are fixed, there can be no jobs, no economy and nothing but layoffs, evictions, cutbacks, fare hikes, tuition increases, etc., is not some commandment decreed by heaven. It’s a rule made down here on earth to protect the interests of the few against that of the many.

We refuse to accept the rules that say that the only good way to do things is the way that makes rich capitalists happy and leaves the rest of us at their mercy. Such rules must be changed. The only certain thing is that nothing will change unless people demand it so.

Here’s our fourth reason for naming the jobs program after Dr. King. The election of an African-American president is without a doubt the realization of a part of King’s dream. But a president is not a substitute for a mass movement for social justice.

King knew that the captains of industry were not going to suddenly wake up one morning believing that the cause of eco-

nomie and social justice was superior to their profit motive and thus create good-paying jobs for the poor. King knew that it would take a mass social movement to get the job done.

It is a mistake—and a dangerous one for those of us who are still rejoicing over how we made history last November—to simply sit on the sidelines and wait to see how things turn out instead of raising hell.

King served the interests of the down-trodden and oppressed. Obama must serve all sides. To the extent that Obama wants to do things that directly bail out poor and working people, don’t forget that there are powerful people in Washington and on Wall Street who are dedicated to stopping him. Those powerful people will prevail unless they see and hear the angry masses marching in the streets below their ivory towers.

The popular outrage over the bailout of the banks is a precious and powerful force. It should not, it must not be wasted. Let’s focus that anger into the struggle for the things that we need.

We’ll be on Wall Street on April 3 demanding that the unemployed be bailed out with a real jobs program. We invite you to join us.

Charles Barron is a member of the City Council of New York City. Chris Silvera is secretary-treasurer of Local 808 of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and past president of the Teamsters National Black Caucus.

Dr. King’s legacy of struggle lives on today

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Following are excerpts from an article that can be read in its entirety on www.workers.org.

What is often ignored by the federal government and the mass media that pay tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. annually is the tremendous anti-war and social justice legacy that the civil rights leader left during the critical years of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

In March of 1967 Dr. King participated in the first massive anti-war demonstration of the era in Chicago, where he marched alongside Dr. Benjamin Spock; Stokely Carmichael, then chair of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee; and others who had already taken a firm stand against U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

In late 1967 in a radio broadcast over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s annual Massey Lecture Series, he said: “The war in Vietnam is just a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit. And if we ignore this sobering reality, we will find ourselves organizing clergy and laymen concerned committees for the next generation. They will be concerned

with Guatemala and Peru; they will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia; they will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa. We will be marching for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies without end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life and politics.”

Four decades later, the U.S. political economy is still driven by war and economic exploitation. Today the focus of attention for U.S. militaristic and imperial ambitions centers on Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and north Korea, as well as other areas of interest which include Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Sudan, Zimbabwe, the Horn of Africa and Cuba.

Dr. King’s assassination on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, amid the ongoing sanitation workers’ strike that had paralyzed the city, illustrated the inability of the U.S. ruling class to come to grips with the necessity of reforming its own system that is rooted in racism, genocide, greed and class dominance. As we move further into a new century and millennium, we are faced with the continuation of many of the same ills that Dr. King fought against during the late 1960s.

As thousands of people demonstrate against the current bailout of Wall Street and the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is important to reflect on the significance of this year’s anniversary of the martyrdom of Martin Luther King Jr. We must continue the true legacy of Dr. King by opposing U.S. militarism and the continued exploitation of the poor and working people of the U.S. and the world.

He called for a radical redistribution of wealth in the U.S., which would involve the adoption of policies that would require a guaranteed annual income for all people in the country.

Just prior to the April 3-4 mobilizations in New York, tens of thousands gathered in London to protest the G20 summit. The G20 became a focal point of anti-war, environmental, social justice and economic rights organizations and coalitions. People outside this international gathering were raising the same issues that the mass organizations in the U.S. are addressing.

Not only the growing impoverishment of the oppressed African-American, Latina/o, Asian and other people of color and women, but also the worsening con-

ditions of the white working class have become sources of renewed struggle and are also raising contradictions in the U.S. to new levels.

Millions of people of all races have been evicted from their homes, thrown out of their jobs and robbed of their health care benefits and pensions. These broad population groups within the country must mobilize and organize into a coalition that can effectively change the nature of the debate and political struggle in the coming period.

The failure of U.S. imperialism to accept and come to grips with its racist past has come to light with the refusal of the administration to participate in the Durban Review Summit in Geneva. However, this denial of the racist past cannot obscure the continuing phenomenon of national oppression inside the country and throughout the world. The oppression of the Palestinian people and their struggle for liberation and statehood will not go away simply because the imperialist nations refuse to attend an international conference.

People of conscience in the U.S. have no other choice but to link up with the working class and the poor and oppressed masses of the world in a common struggle for a new system. □



WW
Commentary

DETROIT

People’s Summit for jobs, economic justice

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions has announced plans for a People’s Summit at Grand Circus Park from June 14-17. The four-day demonstration will coincide with the June 15-17 National Business Summit occurring two blocks away at Ford Field in downtown Detroit. Corporate heads, economists, academic leaders and politicians from around the U.S. will be meeting there to discuss business, energy, technology and the environment. President Barack Obama and cabinet members have been invited.

Coalition activists are asking community organizers from around the country to attend the People’s Summit. They hope “a tent city of the jobless, underpaid, foreclosed-upon, homeless and all who struggle for economic and social justice”

will galvanize others into demanding an economic bill of rights for poor and working people.

Activists are fighting for “a people’s stimulus program” that provides jobs and real economic relief to the millions of workers and oppressed people now bearing the brunt of the capitalist economic crisis, instead of the government’s continued giveaway of trillions of dollars to the banks and corporations.

Organizers say it’s “outrageous” that the National Business Summit will be held in a city with record-high unemployment and poverty rates, layoffs, budget cuts, school closings, utility cost hikes and shut-offs and massive home foreclosures.

With a registration fee of \$1,495, it is unlikely that any victims of foreclosures and evictions, let alone laid-off workers, will be able to attend the National Business Summit. No one at this event

will be speaking in the interests of those most affected by the capitalist collapse.

Because of the foreclosure epidemic which has devastated the city, the median home value in Detroit is now just \$7,000. The official unemployment rate in this primarily African-American city now stands at 22.2 percent. Michigan overall has the highest unemployment rate in the U.S. at 12 percent. These rates leave out workers who have stopped looking for a job and those who can only find part-time work.

The People’s Summit is being seen as a place for political discussion and strategizing, a base for directly confronting the big-business summit through marches and demonstrations, as well as a center for resistance.

Every day in Detroit bailiffs are tossing people out of their homes after foreclosures. During the People’s Summit, organizers hope to implement a moratorium on these evictions by going into the neighborhoods and supporting homeowners who are willing to confront the bailiffs. Summit participants will go out during the day to support a critical petition campaign for affordable water rates in Detroit, where 45,000 households have had their water cut off. If there is a strike, the People’s Summit will join workers on the picket lines.

The People’s Summit is already receiving attention in the progressive movement in Detroit. Members of the MLK Day Committee have volunteered to coordinate the task of providing food to the participants. The owner of a music café is planning entertainment and music.

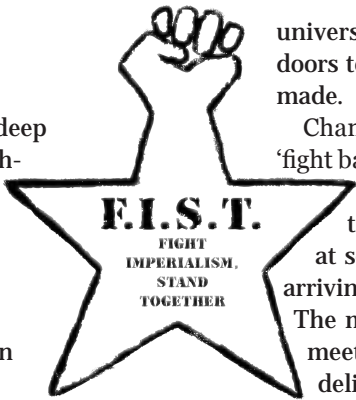
The Moratorium NOW! Coalition will host an organizing meeting for the People’s Summit on April 11, 1 p.m., at 5920 Second Ave. in Detroit. Visit www.moratorium-mi.org or call (313) 680-5508 for more information. □

UNC students & workers fight cutbacks

By Ben Carroll
Chapel Hill, N.C.

The prospect of deep budget cuts throughout the University of North Carolina system brought dozens of workers, students and faculty members out in Chapel Hill March 26 to rally against layoffs, cuts in student services, and other cuts the university is proposing to make on the backs of workers and students.

Despite the rain, workers and students rallied in the main part of campus then marched to the Carolina Inn, an elite hotel on the edge of campus where the UNC Chapel Hill Board of Trustees was holding its meeting with the chancellor and other



university administrators behind closed doors to discuss how some cuts would be made.

Chanting, “They say ‘cutback,’ we say ‘fight back,’” and, “No ifs, no buts, no education cuts,” the march snaked through campus, tying up traffic at several major intersections, before arriving at the board of trustees meeting. The marchers swarmed into the board meeting, encircled the entire room, and delivered three broad demands.

Workers and students demanded that any layoffs or furloughs should occur only at administrative levels, highlighting the fact that the university chancellor and other administrators make more than 15 times the salary of most rank-and-file workers on campus—housekeepers, groundskeepers and clerical support staff.

They demanded the university not cut costs by leaving positions unfilled, forcing

one person to do the job of many, without any increase in pay; and that no cuts in student services, increases in class sizes or increases in tuition should be made.

Another demand was for full transparency of every aspect of the budget and an end to the closed meetings where administrators make their decisions about what to cut. The final demand centered around community involvement in decisions about how the university will handle the budget crisis; the protesters called for creation of a board of workers, students and faculty to participate in any decisions about the budget crisis.

University Chancellor Holden Thorp recently instructed all campus departments to make permanent 5 percent cuts. These are likely to increase as legislators hammer out the state budget over the coming months and the full magnitude of the cuts are realized. UNC System President

Ersine Bowles, who served as a top aide in the Clinton White House, has promised that at least 500 workers will lose their jobs in UNC’s system because of the cuts.

This demonstration by workers, students, and faculty was a decisive rejection of UNC’s attempts to cut costs by firing workers and eliminating student services. It is a clear sign that workers and students are ready to wage a concerted fight to stop any cuts.

In comments to reporters, the chancellor and board of trustees members called the demonstrators and their demands “misguided.” What is truly misguided is these bosses’ belief that workers and students will not fight back against the cuts—and the logic of claiming that the only way to deal with this crisis of capitalism, created not by workers or students but by the bankers on Wall Street, is to lay off workers and cut student services.

North Carolina’s unemployment rate rose to an all time official high of 10.7 percent in February. That’s the fourth highest in the country. University workers know that they cannot afford to join the unemployment lines.

An ad hoc coalition of workers, students and faculty members recently formed to organize a broad fight against cuts and layoffs. This coalition is committed to building a strong movement on campus to defeat the university’s strategy of pushing all cuts on the backs of workers and students. The university bosses can expect this growing movement to stop layoffs and cutbacks to continue to grow as more and more workers and students unite to fight back.

“While one demonstration isn’t going to bring the administration to the table or make them do what we say, we’re building momentum and solidarity among workers, students and faculty. I’m confident that this organizing will pick up steam. We have the power and influence to make some changes,” said Rakhee Devasthali, a leader of Feminist Students United, part of the emerging coalition against the budget cuts.

Carroll is an organizer with Raleigh-Durham Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) and Student Action with Workers (SAW).

Gov't report shows

Low-wage workers need EFCA

By Cheryl LaBash

Low-wage workers are vulnerable to wage theft by bosses over and above the “normal” capitalist theft of the vast surplus value created by workers. This conclusion of a March 25 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office won’t come as a surprise to immigrant workers, day laborers and millions of workers from small shops to huge multi-national corporations.

The report exposes another reason to fight for the Employee Free Choice Act designed to remove barriers against workers forming unions. The Wages and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor is an inadequate defender of workers’ rights even under the existing laws.

Organized workers, however, have immense potential power that can be immediately brought to bear on bosses violating laws and agreements, as dramatically proven last December by United Electrical Local 1110 at Republic Windows

and Doors in Chicago. These workers successfully enforced the plant-closing pre-notification WARN Act by taking possession of the plant and equipment amassed by their sweat equity.

The Wage and Hour Division receives violation complaints regarding minimum wage, overtime pay, child labor and family medical leave based on the Fair Labor Standards Act covering more than 100 million workers.

The GAO report tracked complaints about underage children doing dangerous work at a meat-packing plant. Other complaints came from clerks at dry cleaners, convenience stores, and laundromats; restaurant wait staff, dishwashers and janitors; construction day laborers, siding installers and house painters; teen counselors at a boarding school; paramedics, lawn mowers, receptionists, garment workers, sewers, and fuel tank mechanics—all reporting their bosses’ failure to pay the final checks, minimum wage or overtime.

The report found delayed investigations;

failure to use all enforcement tools and advising workers with the least resources to sue; no follow-up with employers to confirm that those who agreed to pay actually did. The GAO report also noted Wage and Hour rules that prevented investigators from pursuing cases.

In 2007 the Wage and Hour Division’s Southeast region recorded handling 57 percent of all initial attempts to resolve complaints called “conciliations.” However, by regional policy, unsuccessful conciliations are not recorded in the WHD database. So the success rate was deceptively high and a potentially much larger number of complaints from the Southeast was hidden.

The Southeast region includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky. All but Kentucky are among the “right-to-work” states that sharply restrict the rights of worker organizations. Without unions, more workers are left at the mercy of ineffective government agencies to extract justice from employers. □

ON THE PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

Fired R.I. workers demand pay

Owners of the Colibri jewelry plant in East Providence, R.I., thought they could just lock the workers out of the plant in January and auction off the plant's assets without a fight. But taking a cue from the heroic workers at Republic Windows & Doors in Chicago, the 280 unorganized workers are putting up a fight for the 60 days' pay and 60 days' benefits that are mandated by federal law—as well as for severance pay based on years worked. The workers reached out to local workers' rights groups like Fuerza Laboral and R.I. Jobs with Justice for help, and together formed Colibri Workers for Rights and Justice. Then on March 19 they picketed outside the plant during an auction of the plant's assets. Chanting, "We'll go away when we get our pay," about 200 picketers lined the plant's parking lot. In four separate waves workers sat down, blocking access to the lot, until 14 were arrested. Shirley Samayoa, who had worked at the plant for more than 30 years, was taken away in handcuffs. She told JWJ: "When they shut down Colibri, they expected we would just go away. But we're not going away. We're going to keep fighting until they pay us what they owe us." (www.jwj.org) The Providence City Council and R.I. House of Representatives have both passed resolutions supporting the workers' demands; the workers are pushing for a state law that mandates workers must receive full pay and benefits before banks receive a penny. For more information about the Colibri campaign, see www.fuerza-laboral.org.

Auto parts workers choose dignity

Even though it meant the East Syracuse New Process Gear auto parts plant where they worked would close, members of the United Auto Workers voted 580 to 530 on March 20 to reject a contract from Magna International that would have decimated wages. Joe Addona, an assembler on the third shift, expressed the feelings of the majority: "I'm not turning my back on a job. I have to draw the line some place." (Newsday) The contract would have slashed wages over three years from more than \$29 per hour to \$16.

NYC restaurant owner to eat \$3.3 million

The owner of eight New York City restaurants, including the famous Ollie's Noodle Shop, all of which for years violated overtime and minimum-wage laws agreed March 18 to fork over \$2.3 million in back pay to 813 workers. An additional \$1 million owed 100 workers at a ninth restaurant is still being negotiated. The combined \$3.3 million settlement sets a state record for labor law enforcement. Some workers are owed as much as \$30,000. One waiter worked 12-hour days, six days a week for two years, and yet she only earned \$350 a month before tips. The owner also agreed to allow the state Labor Department to conduct seminars at the restaurants to educate the workers, mostly Chinese immigrants, about their rights under labor law. The owner still faces a federal lawsuit by the Urban Justice Center on behalf of 44 employees at three of the restaurants.

Low-Wage Capitalism

Timely new book by Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx's law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval. The analysis rests on three basic developments in the last three decades:

- The world's workforce available to exploitation by transnational capitalist corporations doubled in the wake of the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe.
- The technological revolutions of the digital age, in both production and communications, have allowed transnational corporations to destroy high-wage jobs and simultaneously expand the global workforce to generate a worldwide wage competition.
- The decline in the economic condition of the workers, driven by the laws of capitalism and the capitalist class, is leading to the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.

Order online at www.Leftbooks.com

On strike for eight months

Solidarity day for Moncure workers

By Dante Strobino and Scott Williams
Chatham County, N.C.

As WW goes to press, the Moncure strike ended on March 31. Details and reactions to the new contract will be reported in upcoming issues.

Workers at the Moncure Plywood LLC factory have been on strike since last July 20 for their basic right to a decent job with safe work conditions. In the past eight months, the striking union members have been confronted with the racist hanging of a noose, replacement by permanent strike-breakers, and a virtual media whiteout of their heroic actions.

Last summer, the Moncure Plywood bosses announced that these skilled workers would now have to work 60 hours per week, while saddling the workers with increases in health insurance premiums by a staggering 300 to 400 percent. The bosses also imposed new changes to seniority policies, allowing for managers to practice favoritism, racism and outright discrimination against the predominantly Black work force. This only adds to the notoriously unsafe working conditions at Moncure, where last year alone the plant was fined over \$37,000 for safety violations.

On March 16, almost 100 community activists joined striking workers on the picket line for a solidarity action in front of the factory in rural Chatham County, N.C. These supporters gathered behind members of Machinists Local W369, chanting through bullhorns, "Eight months on the line; justice, justice, now is the time!" After about an hour of chanting, the crowd moved the picket line to block the road entrance to the plant.

"We've been here long enough. In fact, this is the longest strike in North Carolina history... and we will stay here until it is won," Machinists Local W369 Vice President Allen Moore told the demonstrators.

Shortly thereafter, the picketers were joined by members of the union of locomotive engineers, who pulled up a train to block the entrance. After bosses scrambled to pressure the locomotive to move, the engineers pulled it up to block the second entrance, while the picketers continued to block the main entrance.

Unfortunately, due to the weak labor laws in North Carolina and the terms



WW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

of the collective bargaining agreement, the Machinists union's national staff had to direct the workers to move out of the way of the hauling and service trucks as they entered and left the plant. However, community supporters were not bound by such agreements and did manage to block some trucks temporarily as they crossed the picket line.

"I had never been out [to a Moncure picket line] before. ...The whole scene was really powerful. ...I really felt class solidarity in that moment. ... This is the tangible effect of what is happening because of the mistakes of capitalism," Laura Bickford, a student at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and member of the Raleigh-Durham chapter of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together, told Workers World.

Later that evening, workers and community supporters gathered outside the Chatham County Board of Commissioners meeting to support a resolution from the board that would encourage Moncure bosses to listen to the workers at the negotiating table. Talks have been stalled while the bosses hope that the permanent scabs will gradually acquire the talents for producing the high-quality wood without training from the brothers and sisters who are now on the picket line.

Workers and community supporters packed the courthouse. The board unanimously voted to pass a resolution urging the Atlas Holdings company to return to the bargaining table and negotiate a just contract.

Miriam Thompson, longtime labor and community organizer and a member of the NAACP and HKonJ movement, told WW: "It has taken

incredible courage of these workers to stand up for all of us for eight months. Moncure is no longer a small story. It is a story of every worker fighting for justice."

Given the use of racist policies to break Black and Brown unity, the union busting, and the offshoring of manufacturing, the Moncure strikers' fight for a decent job is connected to the broader fight against the forces of capitalist boom-and-bust production and exploitation.

After mass pressure on La-Z-Boy Furniture Company—through letter writing and a demonstration at their corporate headquarters in Monroe, Mich., by members of the US-Cuba Labor Exchange last November—La-Z-Boy has stopped using wood products that come out of the Moncure plant. However, more pressure is needed at Moncure's other customer outlet stores including Ethan Allen, Rowe Fine Furniture Inc., Franklin Corporation and Drexel Heritage.

On March 28, the news media reported that North Carolina has reached an official unemployment rate of 10.7 percent. This is the highest in the state's recorded history. The political solidarity for the Moncure strikers organized on March 16 is linked to the overall struggle for a massive jobs program and the right to unionize in the state and throughout the country.

Organize the South!

A Job is a Right!

Strobino and Williams are members of Raleigh-Durham chapter of Fight Imperialism Stand Together (FIST) youth group that has helped organize community support behind the Moncure workers' strike.

The latest twist in the Mumia case

Supreme test

By Linn Washington Jr.

The following is excerpted from an article that first appeared in the March 20-22 online edition of Counterpunch. Linn Washington Jr. is an associate professor of journalism at Temple University in Philadelphia and a weekly columnist for The Philadelphia Tribune—the U.S.'s oldest Black-owned newspaper. This case is also covered in an article by CNN Supreme Court producer Bill Mears on March 28 (www.cnn.com). Go to www.counterpunch.org or www.workers.org to read the article in its entirety.

During a jailhouse interview in 1978 a Philadelphia radical awaiting trial for a policeman's death advanced a salient observation about a fundamental flaw in America's legal system.

The "system just makes and breaks laws as it sees fit!" noted this radical, who for years had battled Philadelphia authorities arbitrarily bending and breaking laws to brutally assault his organization.

This observation by a member of Philadelphia's MOVE organization would prove both prophetic and profound for the journalist conducting

that jailhouse interview—Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Four years after that 1978 interview, Abu-Jamal stood trial for murdering a Philadelphia policeman. That trial produced a conviction so mired in controversy that today millions around the globe support Abu-Jamal as the victim of a miscarriage of justice.

Abu-Jamal cites that radical's observation in his new book, "Jailhouse

Continued on page 10



Economic crisis is bad for women

By Kathy Durkin

Women's unemployment rate is rising quickly. At 6.7 percent, it is at its highest level in 23 years.

As layoffs have spread to the service and retail sectors, where women are the majority of workers, their jobless rate grew by an alarming 36.7 percent in the five months prior to February 2009. The rate worsened for African-American women, whose unemployment rate rose to 9.9 percent in February, while for Latinas it reached 10.2 percent.

The economic crisis has hit hard the 40 percent of women who are the sole source of support of themselves and their families. Joblessness has now reached 10.3 percent of these women.

Twenty-five percent of women work part-time. They form two-thirds of the part-time work force with 16.7 million employed at these often low-paid jobs with few if any benefits. As for many jobless workers, unemployment insurance is often out of reach for women who have part-time jobs or have given up looking for non-existent work.

Pay equity: a crucial issue

Although decades of struggle have won some gains, lower pay for women is still a big problem. This development has become an entrenched feature of capitalism, even in the industrialized countries. While women, who like men work because of economic necessity, now make up 48 percent of the work force, they are 59 percent of workers who earn less than \$8 per hour.

Examining today's statistic that full-time women workers earn 78 percent of what men earn reveals even more inequality: this figure shows white women's earnings compared to those of white men. African-American women earn only 63 percent of those earnings, while their Latina sisters make only 54 percent. Immigrant women workers are often paid less than minimum wage, with no benefits.

Corporate owners profit greatly by utilizing wage discrimination and underpaying and underemploying women workers. They rake in even more profits through their racist super-exploitation of Black, Latina, Native, Arab and other women workers from oppressed communities, whom they pay even less.

Why the crisis isn't going away, what you can do about it

A short course on the current economic crisis

- 1) The current crisis is a crisis of capitalism. It is not a crisis of socialism or any other economic system. Only capitalism has this kind of crisis that leads to people losing their jobs, their homes and even the food on their table. It is as bad as a war.
- 2) While there are greedy individuals and corporations involved, the greed and corruption did not cause the crisis. Capitalist crises are not caused by bad individuals or evil corporations. It is just that it is only during a crisis that these bad sorts are exposed, in the scramble to find blame. Why don't they blame capitalism? They should, because it is capitalism that causes these economic crises. Crisis is built into the capitalist system.
- 3) The driving force of capitalism is profits. Profits rule and capitalists must constantly expand their profits or they fail. Everything is produced for profit, not for need. So when there is



This inequity and impoverishment are inherent in the capitalist profit system, which underpays as much of the work force as possible for the profits of a wealthy few—unless it is consciously fought against by workers and their unions, which can bring down the level of exploitation and demand full-time jobs with decent pay and benefits.

Nearly 14 percent of women are poor in the U.S. Thirty-seven million people here now live in poverty. That's 12.7 percent of the population, the highest rate in the industrialized world.

Nineteen million women have no health coverage. They are 70 percent of adults receiving food stamps and two-thirds of the elderly in this program.

Many states, which cut public assistance in 1996 after the Clinton administration dismantled the welfare program, have either not reinstated benefits or have cut them even more harshly, leaving low-income women and their children with no "safety nets."

Millions of women, especially African Americans and Latinas, single mothers and the elderly, face losing their homes. Increasing foreclosures, evictions and job losses are propelling more women and families into homelessness. High food, transit, fuel and other costs during this economic crisis are

overproduction, when more has been produced than can be sold at a profit (and usually an increase in profits is required), then a crisis is reached. When nothing can be sold, there is a capitalist crisis. Autos, for example, are in a crisis of overproduction. Not that there aren't millions of people who need a new car, but the autos that are being produced cannot be sold at the rate of profit demanded by the industrial capitalists and the bankers (finance capitalists).

- 5) We are now in the downward spiral of a capitalist crisis of overproduction.
- 6) A capitalist crisis is the result of an economic system. This is not a natural force like a flood or a tornado. It can be controlled and even reversed. But not through capitalist measures. Only by replacing capitalism with socialism can this crisis be truly ended.
- 7) That can be done, but not easily. Not overnight. But throwing out capitalism is the only solution possible. Let's do it!

International Working Women's Day, March 8, NYC.
WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

ment and poverty are intrinsic to the capitalist system. The ruling class callously accepts impoverishment of workers while throwing trillions of dollars at banks and corporations.

The crisis engulfing millions of women does not have to be. There is another way to live. Socialism guarantees the basic necessities of life such as jobs, health care, food, childcare, education and housing. Based on public instead of private ownership of industries, production under socialism is geared to meet human needs, not to make profits for a wealthy few. Nor is it based on exploitation of human labor.

pushing more families over the edge.

This is a crucial time for people's movements, the unions, community and progressive forces to push back as hard as possible and fight for jobs, decent pay and benefits for women and all workers.

Economic crises, low wages, unemploy-

on exploitation of human labor.

Ninety miles off Florida's coast is socialist Cuba. There women have made great economic, political and social gains. The fruits of their labor are used for the benefit of society—for universal free health care, education, and more. □

Progressive Filipinos in U.S. organize



PHOTO: BEVTANG/ANAKBAYAN LOS ANGELES

By Bill Cecil
Los Angeles

Nearly 200 delegates and observers from five U.S. cities packed the UCLA Labor Center on March 29 for the third congress of BAYAN-USA and the founding congress of GABRIELA-USA.

BAYAN-USA, which unites several mass organizations, is the first overseas chapter of the New Patriotic Alliance of the Philippines. GABRIELA-USA will be the U.S. chapter of the eponymous Philippine women's organization.

The theme of the BAYAN event was: "Strengthen our alliance and intensify our political struggle against the U.S.-Arroyo clique and for the rights and welfare of Filipinos in the U.S." Those present were addressed by Skype internet phone connection from the Netherlands by exiled Filipino revolutionary leader Jose Maria Sison, who also chairs the International League of Peoples' Struggle.

Secretary General Emmi De Jesus of GABRIELA-Philippines opened and keynoted GABRIELA-USA's founding congress.

Most of the delegates were under 30,

which was reflected in the spirit and energy of the political and organizational discussion and the March 28 cultural night.

Over half the delegates were women, as were a majority of the BAYAN chapter's newly elected leadership. This leadership includes Chairperson Bernadette Ellorin, Secretary-General Rhonda Ramiro, Vice-chair Kuusela Hilo and Deputy Secretary-General Jack De Jesus. Raquel Redondez will be General Secretary of the new GABRIELA chapter.

Delegates discussed how to confront issues facing the Filipino community, from rising unemployment, home foreclosures and racist immigration policy in the U.S. to U.S. intervention and death-squad terror in the Philippines. The BAYAN congress opened with a rally at the Philippine consulate protesting the Arroyo regime's terror against the Filipino people.

The GABRIELA congress closed with a march to nearby MacArthur Park, where marchers draped a statue of murderous U.S. Gen. Douglas MacArthur with a banner demanding "Junk VFA," referring to the Visiting Forces Agreement that allows the U.S. military to operate with impunity on Philippine soil. □

If workers were in charge

What could be done with \$10 TRILLION

By Deirdre Griswold

Over the last year, the Bush and Obama administrations have committed almost \$10 TRILLION to bailing out banks and other financial institutions that finally crashed after years of raking in extravagant profits. Last September Congress approved the first big bailout plan, the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), to the tune of \$700 billion.

There is still no accounting of where all this money has been going.

However, here's a list of some of the biggest corporations on Wall Street that have already received almost \$250 billion in handouts:

- BANK OF AMERICA ..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$ (\$45 billion)
- CITIGROUP ..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$ (\$45 billion)
- AIG ..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$ (\$40 billion)
- JPMORGAN CHASE ..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$ (\$25 billion)
- WELLS FARGO ..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$ (\$25 billion)
- GOLDMAN SACHS ..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$ (\$10 billion)
- MORGAN STANLEY ..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$ (\$10 billion)
- GM & GMAC ..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$ (\$9.4 billion & \$5 billion)
- PNC FINANCIAL SERVICES ..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$ (\$7.58 billion)
- U.S. BANCORP ..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$ (\$6.6 billion)
- CHRYSLER HOLDING & CHRYSLER FINANCIAL SERVICES ..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$ (\$4 billion & \$1.5 billion)
- SUNTRUST BANKS ..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$ (\$3.5 billion)
- REGIONS FINANCIAL ..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$ (\$3.5 billion)
- AMERICAN EXPRESS ..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$ (\$3.39 billion)
- BANK OF NEW YORK MELLON ..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$..\$ (\$3 billion)

AND A BEVY OF SMALLER BANKS
(From the Associated Press Bailout Tracker)

It seems all they had to do was hold out their hands and the gold rained down on them.

The fact that the government can even think of promising the money sharks the mind-boggling sum of \$10 trillion shows how tremendously productive U.S. workers have been—and could be again if jobs were available producing what people need.

As workers, we need to think about how we would spend such vast resources in order to directly ease the crisis for the millions now facing desperate conditions. If workers, instead of bankers like Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and Fed Chairperson Ben Bernanke, were

really in control and could plan the economy, wouldn't we put jobs and services first? Here are a few ideas on how that could be done.

A REAL JOBS PROGRAM

With just \$1 trillion out of the \$10 trillion the government is giving to the financial elite, we could create jobs for 20 million people a year at a salary of \$50,000 each. Spend \$3 trillion over three years and we could wipe out unemployment and underemployment in this country.

Workers in many public services are terribly overworked. Let's shorten the workweek (with no cut in pay) for those already employed and put those 20 million new hires on the payroll to do the many things that are needed to improve the schools, provide health care, transportation, clean the environment and so on.

After spending \$3 trillion on wages for our new jobs program, we'd still have \$7 trillion left.

HEALTH CARE

Britain will spend about \$131 billion on its National Health system this year, which guarantees health care to everyone, most of it free. The total amount spent on health care in the U.S. last year, both public and private, was \$2.19 trillion. The U.S. has roughly three times as many people as Britain, so with a similar national health system it should be able to cover everyone for much less than is spent now—about \$400 billion a year.

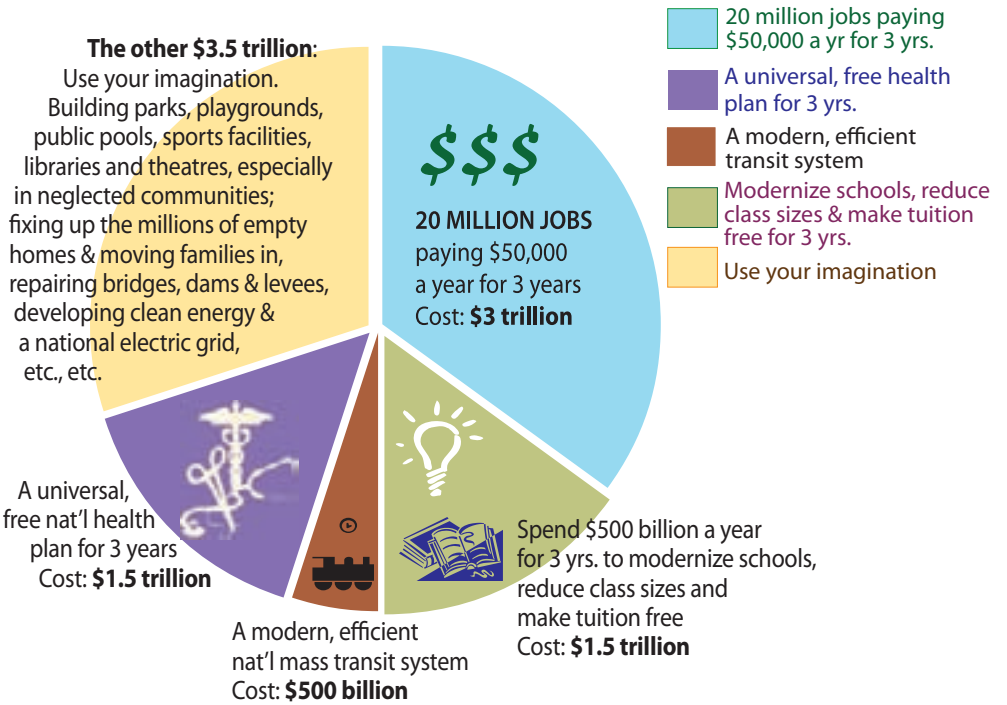
But let's be generous. The government should easily be able to set up a quality national health system that is free and affordable, and not based on profits, for half a trillion a year. This would actually save the people of this country more than \$1.5 trillion a year while making us healthier.

Despite all the money now spent on health care, the U.S. ranks below Britain and almost all other developed countries in life expectancy and the survival rate of infants and children—two key indicators of the health of the population.

Three years of national health would cost \$1.5 trillion. That leaves \$5.5 trillion.

Fact: the gov't has committed \$10 TRILLION to bail out banks

What \$10 TRILLION could deliver (if spent directly for people's needs)



MASS TRANSIT

Facing high gas prices and worries about air pollution and climate change, more people than ever have been taking mass transit. In the U.S., people made 10.7 billion trips on public transit in 2008 and drove less. Shouldn't the government be encouraging this? But instead, state and local funds for mass transit are being cut drastically. Trains, buses and subways are being allowed to deteriorate and workers are being laid off. The result is crowded buses and trains, long waits, frequent breakdowns and steeply higher fares—which will drive many riders back to private cars, if they can afford them.

The Obama administration stimulus package contains just \$8.6 billion for improving existing mass transit, mainly by replacing old buses with more energy-efficient ones. It contains another \$8 billion for high-speed rail service, which will do little for inner-city commuters who have to put up with service cuts and higher fares.

Think of what it would mean if, instead of \$16.6 billion, the government got serious and spent \$500 billion over three years on improving mass transit: cleaner

air, faster commuting times, more jobs, lower fares. And the auto workers now being laid off could be hired to build efficient, speedy buses.

That leaves \$5 trillion.

EDUCATION

The stimulus package provides more than \$100 billion for early childhood, K-12 and higher education over the next two years. However, state budgets are in such a crisis that they are still cutting school programs, laying off teachers and raising tuition at the college level. The public schools have deteriorated, especially in inner cities, where the buildings are old, there are not enough books, and class sizes are large. An infusion of \$500 billion a year from the federal government to improve the schools would turn this around.

That leaves \$3.5 trillion.

These figures are all arbitrary. But you get the idea. There's plenty of wealth in this country to end the crisis and get everyone working again with a roof over their head and health care, transportation and education they can rely on.

What are we waiting for? Let's organize, organize, organize and fight for it! □

Youth say: We deserve a better system

Continued from page 1

BBC: "Since the financial crisis plagued the world, prices shot up suddenly and now even fulfilling the daily necessities is difficult. ... A period of high unemployment may see a waste of the brilliant potential of our youth." (March 28)

As the economic and financial crisis circles the globe, youth and students are increasingly caught in its net. What is outrageous is that these terrible hardships and the bleak outlook that youth face are inherent to the system we all live under.

Capitalism cannot exist without exploiting working people. In order to gain the most profit, capitalist corporations and businesses must pay workers the least amount possible. Capitalist governments, which have as their first priority the preservation of the capitalist system, only provide services to workers in response to the

workers' fight for their rights—and in fear that the workers will decide to get rid of capitalism itself. They promote racism, sexism and homophobia to try to get us to fight amongst ourselves instead of fighting them.

When the going gets tough, as in current times, the government seeks to bail out the capitalists—not you and me, who are suffering the most.

It's time we got rid of this system.

Another system exists in Cuba, where a socialist revolution occurred 50 years ago. There youth are guaranteed free health care and quality education, all the way through college, that won't saddle them with a lifetime of debt. Cuba even provides scholarships for youth around the world to attend its medical school, as long as they promise to return home to serve the underserved. All this is done as Cuba

faces a blockade from the U.S., making it harder for the country to get medical supplies, food, technology and more.

Under socialism, the priority is people and not profits. So the need to discriminate and oppress people on the basis of sexuality, race or gender disappears. Cuba has implemented a number of social programs to combat the legacy of sexism, racism and homophobia that originated with the island country's colonization by capitalist forces.

Cuba had its own rough time, known as "the Special Period," which occurred after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba's main trading partner. Everyone suffered as a result—and it was everyone, not just the workers and the poor—but even during the Special Period, not one hospital or school closed.

Cuba values its youth. Youth in the

Union of Young Communists have been given responsibility, over the years, to implement literacy campaigns, to defend the revolution and to help rebuild the country's infrastructure after the Special Period. Rather than demonize youth culture, the Cuban government has embraced hip-hop culture, even creating a Cuban Rap Agency with its own record label and magazine.

Youth in the U.S., and around the world, need socialism—a system where the needs, growth and development of the person and the community come first and foremost. As capitalism gets battered by its own natural tendencies, let's help tear it apart.

Dowell was a participant in a 2007 delegation to Cuba led by the youth group FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together. Visit www.fistyouth.org.

Peoples assembly for social justice

Activists from around the country and especially the Southwest met in San Antonio to participate in the Border Peoples Movement Assembly on March 19-23.

The BPMA is a follow-up to the work carried out by organizers and supporters of the U.S. Social Forum; within the USSF framework are both the Border Social Forum and the Southeast Social Forum.

In 2007, the U.S. Social Forum convened in Atlanta, where over 20,000 people, primarily people of color, met for the first time in the U.S. as part of the World Social Forum formation. The U.S. Social Forum aims to build a diverse grassroots social movement that addresses the many issues and problems working people face in this country and around the world.

The San Antonio meeting had as its goal “to establish a permanent base of social movement organizations ... working on the U.S. Mexico border.” It was also a first step “on the road to Detroit.”

The second U.S. Social Forum is scheduled to convene in Detroit the third week in June 2010. Organizers of the Detroit Social Forum stated that they aim to double the attendance from the 2007 meeting in Atlanta, to 40,000 people.

There were several outcomes to the San Antonio meeting. One was a Unity in Action calendar, which includes building for May Day 2009, organizing an anti-war action on March 20, actions against NAFTA and the militarization of the U.S./Mexican border and other actions, as well as supporting the April 3 action on Wall Street.

—Teresa Gutierrez



PHOTO: RUBEN SOLIS

Wall St. greed IS capitalism Only socialism can guarantee jobs, housing, health care, equality

Continued from page 1

er of microchips. Many more threads are connected to the auto industry, including the stores in the communities surrounding the auto factories, parts plants and dealerships.

The crisis haunting the auto industry is sweeping the whole capitalist economy and represents a growing crisis for the working class.

Breaking out of capitalist framework

The auto workers are told that if they don't make concessions, the company won't be competitive and they will lose their jobs. To accept this capitalist logic is fatal. The bosses say that if workers at GM make concessions, then GM will be competitive with Toyota. But as soon as GM lowers wages, Toyota will tell its workers that if they don't take cuts, then GM will win the competition. The one that pays the lowest wages wins.

This type of “concessions bargaining” has become standard practice—the working class has been pushed into a competitive race to the bottom.

Workers must not become imprisoned by the framework erected by capitalism. They must establish their own legality, their own arguments. Demands like the right to a job or 30 hours' work for 40 hours' pay need to be raised. This can only be done in the course of struggle.

Republic Windows and Doors workers in UE Local 1110 in Chicago showed last December how to insist on the rights of the workers over the property rights of the bosses. Their boss, on three days' notice, had moved his operation to Iowa. They seized the factory and held it until Bank of America, which financed Republic, agreed to give them the benefits and severance pay they were entitled to.

This heroic example was followed by workers at Waterford Crystal in Ireland, who explicitly declared they were following the example of the Republic workers. A similar takeover just took place at an auto plant in Windsor, Canada.

In all these cases, workers overrode the property rights of the bosses and basically declared their right to occupy the plant on the grounds that their labor had created the factory and everything produced there.

A job is a right!

To combat the epidemic of layoffs, the workers need to take this struggle a step further and assert the right to a job as a property right. We must expand the rights claimed by the Republic workers to include not just the right to severance and other benefits due but the right to the job itself. Workers create the products or services sold by the employer, thus generating the profits of the employer and the wealth necessary to build the facilities and keep them running.

While the Republic victory was a product of their courage and boldness, the

mass support the workers got was crucial. To begin to establish a job as a right will take mass mobilizations of the working class in a broad struggle. But this is a powerful antidote to the unending wave of layoffs seen recently.

This principle must also be applied to housing as a right, food as a right, health care as a right. For those who cannot work, income is a right. It applies to all workers, employed and unemployed, documented and undocumented, organized and unorganized—the entire multinational working class, Black, Latina/o, Asian, Native and white.

Community-labor alliances, People's Assemblies, and other coalitions need to be mobilized to unite the various struggles that are now being conducted in separation from one another. The Bail Out the People movement, based in New York and spreading to other cities, is trying to accomplish this goal. People's Assemblies based in North Carolina and Virginia are being organized. The concept of unified mass struggle involving the communities and the workers must be expanded.

The right of bankers and mortgage brokers to throw people out of their homes is being contested in Detroit, Boston, New York, Los Angeles and other cities. During the 1930s the movement to stop evictions became a mass movement putting hundreds of thousands of people back in their homes. The people established the right to housing through direct struggle.

Capitalism is the problem

The contradictions of capitalism are intensifying at great speed as the crisis escalates. Because of private property and the profit system, tent cities of the homeless are spreading from St. Petersburg, Fla., to Fresno and Sacramento, Calif. This is capitalism—homeless people amidst a glut of empty houses.

Construction workers are unemployed because they produced too many houses to be sold at a profit. Auto workers are idled because they produced too many autos. Yet millions of people need autos—especially in rural areas and in cities where the auto companies have undermined mass transportation.

The U.S. has a minimum of mass transportation and a maximum of polluting automobiles. Society needs railroad cars, high-speed trains, subways, buses and all forms of mass transportation. But a railroad or subway car lasts for years. The auto industry thrives on families having two cars and having to repurchase every few years, buy parts, and keep the profits rolling in. The oil companies thrive on selling gas.

People in the U.S. spend more than \$2 trillion a year on health care but there are 45 million uninsured and millions underinsured. The medical-industrial complex is milked for profit. From the insurance companies to the pharmaceutical compa-

nies to the medical instrument companies to the for-profit hospitals, health care is a capitalist commodity.

Each day another pundit or politician declares that education is the key to the future. Yet the public school system is starved and budgets are being cut. Private, non-union, profit-making charter schools are spreading, teachers' pay is dropping and teachers are being laid off so that state and local governments can pay the bondholders. Millions of youth, disproportionately African-American and Latina/o, go to substandard schools. College costs are skyrocketing; college loans are profit centers for the banks and other lenders. Many students drop out because of debt. If they do graduate, where will they find a job?

The capitalists, through their media, express public praise of Barack Obama as the first African-American president while at the same time they foster racist police departments and occupations of Black and Latina/o communities in order to repress the youth. The bosses regard these youth as an excess labor force who, because they are jobless, are not a source of profit. They are abandoned because the capitalist establishment sees no profit in them and sees no use in educating and supporting them. Thus oppressed youth must be controlled by violence and repression, including imprisonment and the death penalty.

And, of course, capital benefits politically by stirring racism to divide the workers against each other.

Publicly, the representatives of the capitalists condemn undocumented workers coming across the border. In private, behind the scenes, the bosses foster and thrive off undocumented immigration to get the benefit of super-profits made from highly exploited, low-wage, unprotected labor.

Their system is going bankrupt. The cities, roads and bridges are decaying while they pour billions into wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. They call small countries trying to defend themselves a threat to peace, yet they boast of more military might than the entire rest of the world combined. They patrol the seven seas and menace countries, large and small, to advance the profit interests of the oil companies and transnational corporations.

These contradictions flow from the fact that all capitalist society is run for profit. All capitalists make profit by exploiting labor and selling what the workers produce.

Socialism is the solution

The creation of an average automobile, which is assembled from 15,000 different parts, is the result of a global organization of production. The components, the design, the engineering come from all corners of the globe.

The construction of a home is also the result of global labor that produces the raw materials and the various compo-

nents needed. The same is true of medicines, hospital beds, medical instruments, and all the expertise that goes into making up a medical institution.

There are endless examples showing that labor is in fact socialized. It is intricately interconnected and organized in vast cooperative enterprises by the bosses. Yet this entire global apparatus of socialized production is privately owned by a handful of billionaires who operate it, or shut it down, based on one sole criterion—making a profit.

The decisions they make, all struggling against each other, determine what gets produced, how many people work and under what conditions—regardless of the needs of humanity.

The entire world working class operates under the whip of these billionaires. They have armies of underlings on all continents to crack the whip, speed up the line worker or the truck driver, pile more work on the nurse or the fast-food worker, the construction worker, the call center worker, etc. With globalization, these owners now push workers in every climate, in every language, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to get the most unpaid labor, the most profit.

The pharmaceutical giants spend more money on research trying to beat each other to the market with yet another painkiller or another cholesterol-lowering drug than on trying to collectively fight AIDS or malaria because these drugs find global consumer markets. They operate in secrecy and waste enormous resources in duplicate research and advertising wars.

In a planned society organized to meet human need, these resources could fund free, quality health care and shared research to improve prevention while coping with serious diseases.

Rational social planning on behalf of all human beings is impossible under capitalism because of private property and the profit system. A rationally organized society in which the resources and productive forces were socially owned, and profit was not a consideration, would immediately begin to match up the growing millions of homeless people with the growing stock of empty homes. Only the profits of the banks and lenders stand between rational planning of housing. Affordable, quality housing for all would become a planned objective of a socialist society.

Educational, environmental, health and all other socially useful and necessary goals would be set and planned for. Resources would be allocated and organization put in place to achieve the goals. This is what socialism looks like.

In order to accomplish socialized ownership, the economy has to be brought into harmony with the socialized production that already exists. Those who create all the wealth must own it. Socialism is the only alternative and capitalism must be pulled down in order to get there. □

XIII International Seminar in Mexico City

Crisis centered in U.S. hits Latin America

By John Catalinotto
Mexico City

The crisis that began with the bursting of the real-estate bubble in the United States is not only a speculative and financial crisis, but also a profound crisis of capitalist overproduction and also a crisis of militarism, war and the environment and involves the fate of humanity.

While not a uniform or unanimous view, that was the dominant position presented to and by 190 political activists and analysts from 80 parties and 40 countries at the XIII Seminar of the Workers Party of Mexico (PT) held in Mexico City on March 19, 20 and 21. Representatives came from five continents, with the large majority from Latin America and the Caribbean. Some 200 PT members and other Mexican activists attended.

The Seminar's main topic was the worldwide capitalist crisis and its impact on the countries, the workers and the peasants in the "periphery" of the world imperialist system. The focus of this discussion was Latin America, where the movement against "neoliberal" imperialist penetration has reinvigorated the worldwide debate about a socialist future. Participants mirrored the differences and debates among Latin American political tendencies.

The PT is the sixth largest electoral party in the Mexican parliament and has supported Andrés Manuel López Obrador for the presidency. Under Sen. Alberto Anaya's leadership, the PT has hosted the Seminar for the past 13 years. Attending were representatives from parties in pow-

er (Cuba, Vietnam, China, north Korea), from those parties elected to office, and those in both electoral and revolutionary opposition from around the world.

Since the early 1990s, left and center-left governments have replaced U.S.-backed rightist and military regimes through much of Latin America. As Cuban Communist analyst Roberto Regalado noted in his contribution, this change is neither completely due to mass democratic action, nor is it completely due to a change in U.S. policy following the end of the Cold War, but is a result of both.

The Seminar cheered the latest such turn, applauding two women from the leadership of the FMLN of El Salvador who sat at the front table through most of the proceedings. The FMLN, which led the revolutionary armed struggle in the 1980s, recently defeated the rightist party in presidential elections.

Crisis of capitalist civilization

The Seminar mirrored the makeup of the real Latin America. There was representation of most of the political tendencies in the region. Many were participating in the left and center-left governments, others were critical and promoting a more openly revolutionary path.

All at the Seminar spoke strongly against U.S. imperialism. Most also spoke against European capitalist penetration, but with diminished anger. There was also almost universal loathing of the Álvaro Uribe regime in Colombia and almost as much of the current Felipe Calderón government in Mexico. There were, however,

differences in the different groups' relations to their local ruling class and different assessments of the left and center-left governments that govern most Latin American countries.

In his keynote talk, Argentine economist and political analyst Jorge Beinstein described "the decline of the dollar" and "the imperial supremacy" of the United States, saying that it is not only "the flagship of the fleet" that is sinking, but that there is "only one ship" in the imperialist fleet and it is "taking on water." For Beinstein this leads to "a crisis of civilization" with no normal capitalist recovery in sight.

Some of the speakers warned that left parties should not get trapped into a position of managing the capitalist crisis, that is, presiding over increasing unemployment, benefit cutbacks and a collapsing economy until they are replaced by a rightist government. Some added that even if the capitalist economy has no normal recovery, that capitalism will remain dominant unless some party, class or movement pushes it out and replaces it with socialism.

The Dominican political analyst, Narciso Isa Conde, pointed out that the new left and center-left governments have "one section that is revolutionary, one that is social-democratic and one that just rules with a new style." He added that if the crisis does not "produce structural changes that favor self-determination and motion toward a national and continental alternative to capitalist society," then the suffering of the weakest sectors of society will be increased.

Solidarity in struggle

Along with the analysis of this main question, there were also discussions of alternate forms of integration of Latin America, migration, special problems of women, youth and Indigenous peoples, and case studies. Berta Joubert-Ceci of the U.S.-based International Action Center gave a report on the immigrants' struggle in the U.S. and the May Day demonstrations there.

There were also sections of the almost 30 hours of discussion that were statements or demonstrations of solidarity with, for example, the five Cuban political prisoners in the U.S., the representative of the Haitian movement, and the ambassadors of Vietnam, the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea, China, Libya and Iran. Lebanese activist Leila Ghanem, representing the struggles of the peoples of the Middle East against U.S.-Israeli imperialism, reported on the recent Beirut Forum.

Among the current well-known political leaders addressing the Seminar were López Obrador of Mexico and Ollanta Humala of Peru, both narrowly defeated in presidential elections in 2006, and two ministers of the progressive government in Ecuador. Sen. Piedad Córdoba of Colombia, an opponent of the pro-imperialist Uribe regime, spoke by telephone.

Catalinotto represented Workers World Party at the Seminar and gave a talk on "The capitalist world crisis and the possibility for workers' struggle in the United States."

MLB's Magglio Ordóñez

A strong Chávez supporter

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

Right-fielder and batting-champion Magglio Ordóñez is arguably the most popular and well-respected member of the Detroit Tigers Major League Baseball team. He is an excellent ballplayer and beloved by Tigers fans throughout Michigan. At every home game one can see children in the stands emulating their hero's signature look by sporting a Tigers baseball cap with long curly hair attached to the back.

It is likely many fans were wondering what was happening as they watched their favorite Tiger take to the plate and the outfield during the recent World Baseball Classic tournament and heard loud boos erupting from the stands in Miami on March 14 as Venezuela beat the Netherlands 3-1.

Ordóñez, along with fellow Tigers Carlos Guillén, Miguel Cabrera and Armando Galarraga, played for the Venezuelan national team during the Classic. Because he is a long-time supporter of President Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, some fans in Miami took issue with Ordóñez. Like the wealthy capitalists who left Cuba after its victorious socialist revolution in 1959, many Venezuelan capitalists and counterrevolutionaries have emigrated to Miami and southern Florida since Chávez took office in 1999.

Anti-Chávez Venezuelan baseball fans booed Ordóñez repeatedly and cheered loudly when he struck out in the fourth inning against the Netherlands. "He was

booed again ... during pre-game introductions and his first at-bat against Puerto Rico, though this time there were shouts of support as well." (Associated Press, March 16)

Ordóñez recently made a television commercial supporting the Chávez government's successful campaign to abolish presidential term limits. In it he told Venezuelans that "the best of the revolution is yet to come." (Detroit Free Press, March 15)

Baseball is very popular in Venezuela. Chávez called Ordóñez during the tournament to tell the ballplayer not to worry

and that, "We support you here." Chávez publicly defended Ordóñez and stated: "Everyone has the right to think about politics. This is shameful. Viva Magglio and all our compatriots!" (mlive.com, March 17)

As he returned to the Tigers training camp in Lakeland, Fla., Ordóñez told reporters the booing had only bothered him slightly and that he stands by his support of the Venezuelan president: "I regret



nothing. I've done nothing bad to nobody. It's an honor for me to represent my country." (Detroit Free Press, March 27) □

Florida protest: 'No war'

More than 150 protesters marched in Melbourne, Fla., on March 28 to demand an end to war and occupation from Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan to Palestine. The demonstration focused on militarism's destructive impact on the workers and oppressed at home, such as budget cuts in education and other social programs, degradation of the environment, and restrictions on civil liberties and human rights. The action, initiated by a group called Patriots for Peace and endorsed by dozens of organizations across the state, drew participants from cities large and small, including Miami, Jacksonville, Alachua and Palm Bay. The next mobilization for these activists is May Day in Miami.

—Dianne Mathiowetz





What’s next? May Day

People will gather on Wall Street April 3 and 4 to stage a focused political protest against the core center of the U.S. and worldwide capitalist system, now in its most severe crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The protesters are among those searching for a strategy to rescue the working class. The question in the minds of those who want to take the struggle further is: What’s next?

Barring dramatic changes, the answer is obvious: Organize for May Day!

May Day—International Workers’ Day—was first inspired in the 1880s by the actions of tens of thousands of mostly European immigrant workers fighting in Chicago and demanding the eight-hour day. The Communist International recognized the importance of the workers’ struggle in the United States—a rapidly developing capitalist country, continental in scope, and with none of Europe’s feudal past—and declared May 1 as the day for workers to demonstrate across the world.

May Day had been mostly ignored for decades here in the U.S. when in the spring of 2006, immigrant workers and their supporters demonstrated by the millions in a wave of demonstrations across the country. Angered by the threat of the horribly repressive Sensenbrenner bill, they held the strongest May Day job action ever in the U.S., and have been marching on May Day ever since.

In 2006 these immigrants were mostly from Latin America, with a substantial

minority from Asia, the Pacific Islands, Caribbean and Africa. It’s this new group of immigrant workers who have brought May Day back in the United States. Since then immigrants have faced Gestapo-like raids and deportations, along with a loss of jobs since the economic crisis hit. This repression is meant to keep the working class divided, when what is needed is unity.

Sympathy and compassion for immigrant workers are honest and legitimate feelings. But the solidarity immigrant workers deserve from the rest of the working class is not based only on these feelings. Workers born in the U.S. should recognize the great contribution that immigrant workers have made to the struggle of all workers. At this moment workers need all the forces and all the leadership that the immigrant workers can provide. Solidarity with immigrant workers can strengthen the combined struggle of all workers.

Trade union members, bring this message to your unions.

Community organizers, spread it to all the poor and oppressed.

Bring out all members of the working class on May Day to stand in solidarity with immigrant workers and ALL workers. Bring out all workers, students and your community to stand together against the assault by big capital against our jobs, our benefits, our homes.

It is not only the right thing to do. It’s the only way we can win. □

Conference on racism

A response to U.S. boycott

Following are excerpts from a letter and petition initiated by Nord Sud XXI (nordsud21.ch) and the International Action Center to demand that the Obama administration fully participate in the U.N. Durban Review Conference Against Racism in Geneva, Switzerland, April 20-24, and for the Preparatory Committee to take all necessary steps for full governmental and nongovernmental organization (NGO) participation in the conference. Tens of thousands have responded to this petition. Go to <http://www.iacenter.org/racism/durbanreviewpetition>.

The 2001 U.N. Conference on Racism held eight years ago in Durban, South Africa, had the overwhelming support of people of the world—both through their governments and through thousands of delegates representing many hundreds of NGOs and organs of civil society.

Midway through that historic gathering the U.S. and Israel walked out because the latter was criticized for its apartheid practices against Palestinians. The Bush administration also opposed concrete action to redress the history of hundreds of years of slavery and racism. How can we ever resolve these issues without participative dialogue?

In preparing for the April Conference against Racism, the majority of countries from Latin America, Asia and Africa have shown an extraordinary willingness to operate on principles of open-minded compromise and dialogue with the United States. Rejection of this offer by refusing to even come to the table will be seen as an arrogant assault on the processes of

diplomacy and will encourage the international community to brand the United States administration as one obstructing the struggle against racism.

I urge the Obama administration to participate in this international gathering without threats or preconditions and in a spirit of mutual respect for all other nations, especially those whose people have suffered so grievously from racism.

I am shocked that the U.S. has also supported the marginalization of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the Durban Review Conference, seeking to ensure that they are not able to participate or that their freedom of speech is strictly limited, for example, by failing to support an NGO forum.

NGO participation, often through NGO forums, has been an indispensable part of every major U.N. human rights conference. It is therefore essential that the Preparatory Committee and the High Commissioner for Human Rights make every effort possible to provide the resources and logistics for a vigorous public mobilization for the U.N. Durban Review Conference.

I urge the Preparatory Committee to take immediate steps to carry out their responsibility to facilitate NGO participation, especially the participation of NGOs from developing countries that have suffered the most from racism and other similar forms of discrimination.

Partial list of signers:
Ramsey Clark, Winner of United Nations Human Rights Award 2008
Curtis Doebbler, Nord-Sud XXI
General Federation of Iraqi Women
International Action Center

Letter

George Galloway recalls relief convoy to Palestine

By Dee Knight
Newark, N.J.

Following his successful completion of a solidarity convoy to Gaza, former British Member of Parliament George Galloway was swept by a tidal wave of love March 24 at Rutgers University’s Newark, N.J., campus on his first stop in the United States. He was welcomed by the Palestinian American Organization at Rutgers, which also organized university stops in Chicago, Washington, D.C., Michigan, Florida and California.

The convoy completed its 5,000-mile journey from England, with 200 trucks and vans loaded with more than \$2 million worth of relief supplies. “As we enter this land of heroes, we are embraced by heroes,” he said.

Galloway had originally been invited to speak in Canada, but was banned by the Canadian immigration minister—the same one who has deported several U.S. Iraq war resisters. The minister, Jason Kenney, said Galloway was supporting “a terrorist organization” by delivering relief aid to the democratically-elected government of Palestine, led by Hamas. Galloway commented that “the project of determining who should represent other people is a doomed project.”

The Rutgers event was held in Robeson Hall, named for the legendary African-American singer and revolutionary Paul Robeson, a Rutgers football star in the 1940s. Galloway recalled that Robeson was also denied entry to Canada during the 1950s, but succeeded in speaking by radio to a large audience. “Today,” Galloway said, “I’m sure I will speak to a hundred times more people in Canada by live television than I would if the minister had not denied me entry.” A large Canadian movement of protest has developed over the immigration minister’s ban.

The Gaza relief convoy was huge news throughout Europe and the Middle East, but was ignored by the official U.S. media. (Go to www.vivapalestina.org.) Starting in Manchester, England, with 100 trucks and vans and 300 drivers and passengers, the convoy traveled through France and Spain gathering supplies, support and publicity before crossing the Mediterranean Sea by ferry to Morocco, where it was greeted by

thongs of well-wishers.

The Libyan-based Qaddafi Charitable Foundation doubled the convoy’s size by adding 100 large trucks filled with 4,000 tons of aid, together with drivers and support staff. During the four days it took to cross the vast country of Libya, the convoy was treated to warm hospitality, with expenses for fuel, food and lodging covered by the government.

The situation in Egypt was different. The Israeli government pressured the Egyptian government to force the convoy to pass through Israel and be subject to Israeli police prior to entering Gaza. Galloway and the other convoy leaders adamantly refused and a standoff ensued. There were street battles with Egyptian authorities, who tried to split up the convoy and force at least part of it to pass through Israel.

Galloway commented that the official Egyptian police posture was to impose a heavy-handed check on the convoy’s cargo. But unofficially they urged drivers to move through checkpoints as quickly as possible and get the relief supplies safely to Gaza, where they were desperately needed.

The convoy’s arrival in Gaza successfully broke the Israeli blockade of Gaza and delivered a worldwide message: Gaza is not isolated, and its supporters can deliver significant support and solidarity.

Galloway called on supporters of Palestine in North America to follow the convoy’s example. Mae Ramadan, a leader of the Palestinian American Organization at Rutgers, told Workers World that PAO has begun exploring possibilities for a convoy with the Palestinian Children’s Relief Fund and an interreligious (Christian, Muslim & Jewish) peace coalition in New Jersey. PAO has already successfully sent some relief supplies to Gaza.

PAO president Manal Ramadan mobilized a solid base among Arab and Muslim students to convince a reluctant Rutgers administration to allow Galloway to speak. PAO has also reached out effectively to Black, Latina/o and other progressive students. It has worked to engage others on and off campus both in northern New Jersey and on campuses across the country. □

The latest twist in the Mumia case

Supreme test

Continued from page 5

Lawyers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners vs. the U.S.A.” (City Lights Books, 2009). This is the sixth book written by Abu-Jamal during his twenty-five-plus years on Pennsylvania’s death row.

This book examines inmates who have learned law through self-study to challenge criminal convictions and conditions inside prisons. In Chapter 2 of his new book, Abu-Jamal provides his assessment of U.S. law, terming it an “instrument of the powerful, mortality be damned. For the weak, the powerless, the oppressed, the law is more often a hindrance than a help.”

That radical’s observation about arbitrary operation in the justice system accurately describes the Abu-Jamal case where courts—state and federal—have repeatedly altered and/or abrogated established law to block Abu-Jamal receiving relief

granted to other inmates raising the same legal challenges.

The latest example of this alter-law-to-undermine-Abu-Jamal dynamic drives his appeal currently pending before the U.S. Supreme Court. This appeal attacks the 2008 ruling by a federal 3rd Circuit Appeals Court panel that created a new legal standard for persons challenging racist jury selection practices by prosecutors.

That newly created legal standard advanced by two 3rd Circuit judges to reject voluminous evidence documenting racist jury selection practices by the prosecutor during Abu-Jamal’s 1982 trial erects courtroom procedures far in excess of procedures required by existing U.S. Supreme Court and 3rd Circuit rulings. □



Rally in Belgrade marks 10 years since NATO bombing

By Heather Cottin
Belgrade, Serbia

Thousands of people gathered in Belgrade's Republic Square on March 24 to mark the 10th anniversary of the beginning of the 78-day U.S.-NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. This attack, mainly concentrated on Serbia, destroyed Yugoslavia's infrastructure and killed 3,000 people in the 1999 war President Bill Clinton called "humanitarian."

Vladimir Krsljanin, a leader of the Serbian Peoples Movement, which organized the rally, called the event "a new horizon, marking the way out of neoliberalism. Imperialism is crashing," he said, noting the world economic crisis. "Principled people—anti-NATO anti-imperialists—are creating a new people's liberation struggle."

AFGHANISTAN

U.S. expands war

By G. Dunkel

In his March 27 policy statement expanding the U.S. military role in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, President Barack Obama announced that the U.S. would send 4,000 U.S. "trainers" in addition to 17,000 combat troops. According to the president, the U.S. goal would be "to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan."

Afghan Qasim Akhgar, who teaches law at Kabul University and has a reputation as a defender of civil rights and freedom of the press, quickly condemned the U.S. escalation: "Fighting terrorism is just an excuse to justify U.S. military presence in Afghanistan." (Xinhua, March 28)

Akhgar continued: "The driving force for toppling Taliban regime and deploying troops in Afghanistan is to safeguard the interests of U.S. and its western allies in the war-torn Asian state. The strategically important location of Afghanistan that links south Asia to central Asia has prompted Washington and its allies to snatch a foothold in this part of the world."

Those planning demonstrations April 3-5 in Strasbourg, France, to counter the 60th anniversary celebrations of NATO, also oppose the use of NATO troops in Afghanistan and the U.S. attempt to expand the war. They point out in their call, "Proponents and opponents of NATO both view the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan, to which the U.S. is committing significantly more troops, as a key test" for allowing NATO to intervene worldwide.

MUNDO OBRERO

China e India

Continua de pagina 12

ular en el esfuerzo para liberar al país del control británico. Gandhi promovió el culto de la no violencia que limitó la lucha independentista e impidió que l@s trabajadores/as y campesin@s conquistaran el poder del estado. El movimiento comunista de la India fue incapaz en aquel entonces de encabezar la lucha por la independencia hasta su conclusión lógica de revolución socialista. Las consecuencias todavía son visibles, mientras las grandes masas de la India sufren, hay una minoría que se aprovecha de la prosperidad económica del país. □

Ramsey Clark, founder of the U.S.-based International Action Center, who visited Yugoslavia twice in solidarity during the 1999 war, was a featured speaker at the rally along with Serb, German, Bulgarian, Russian, Irish, French and Canadian defenders of Serbia and the former Yugoslavia. Clark decried the illegal kidnapping in 2001 of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and his death in 2006 in NATO's prison in The Hague.

Milosevic had waged a heroic and effective legal defense that turned the war-crimes trial against his NATO jailers.

Though fascist thugs tried to disrupt the demonstration, the presence of many international guests like Ramsey Clark discouraged them, and they were ejected.

In 1999, NATO powers attacked Yugoslavia in contravention of the United

All serious anti-imperialist organizations oppose the U.S. expansion of the war in that region and consider any explanation that this is "fighting terrorism" to be a pretext.

The Taliban, who are the main group within the Afghan resistance to the U.S./NATO occupation of Afghanistan, had already decided on their response. According to the March 27 New York Times the Taliban resolved differences between the Pakistani-based and Afghan-based sections of their movement. "Several Taliban fighters based in the border region said preparations for the anticipated influx of American troops were already being made. A number of new, younger commanders have been preparing to step up a campaign of roadside bombings and suicide attacks to greet the Americans, the fighters said."

On the other hand, both President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan—a complete U.S. puppet—and U.S. client President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan rushed to praise the new U.S. policy.

Karzai is often called the mayor of Kabul because the capital is the only area of Afghanistan his government securely controls. Karzai said he liked Obama's proposal to try to split off the more moderate elements of the Taliban, something Karzai has been urging for a while.

Zardari, who is facing growing popular resistance to his government and his attempts to stifle the opposition, still praised Obama's initiative as "a positive change." Zardari challenged Obama's statement that the Pentagon could take unilateral action with drone attacks within Pakistan. These attacks are deeply unpopular because they kill many civilians and are seen as a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty.

A few days later, Obama reversed his statement, saying on CBS's Face the Nation, "If we have a high-value target within our sights, after consulting with Pakistan, we're going after them."

A Google search for casualties in Afghanistan turns up small but significant numbers, both among Afghan soldiers and cops as well as U.S. and NATO troops in the fourth week of March. For example, an Afghan soldier shot three U.S. soldiers, killing two.

Taliban casualties were also listed, but often the NATO and Afghan puppet forces list any civilians killed as Taliban. □

Nations Charter. NATO's 78-day war resulted in the military and political amputation of Kosovo, the heart and birthplace in 1389 of the nation of Serbia. Speakers noted that few of the world's countries recognize the NATO colony's legitimacy.

Throughout the rally, youths from nearby Belgrade University chanted, "Kosovo is Serbia." Many people carried signs with Milosevic's picture.

During the 78-day war, NATO bomb and rocket attacks saturated Kosovo with depleted uranium and cluster bombs. Thousands fled the bombing. The imperialist propaganda machine claimed the refugees were fleeing Yugoslav attacks.

Kosovo possesses extensive mineral resources. Since its occupation in 1999, it has been turned into a dependent colony of the West, used strategically to spread NATO militarism eastward.

Speakers reminded the crowd that Western media and leaders from 1991 through 1999 saturated the airwaves with lies and propaganda to convince millions that the destruction of socialist Yugoslavia was a "humanitarian" act.

The current pro-imperialist government of Serbia was first installed by a U.S.-engineered coup in 2000 following a close election that should have resulted in a runoff. The new regime immediately set about privatizing the 70-percent publicly

Anti-militarist opponents cheer Czech PM's ouster

By David Hoskins

When Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek resigned, opponents of the U.S. anti-missile radar base cheered. Topolánek's right-wing government lost a March 24 parliamentary no confidence vote following his controversial comments about U.S.-style economic stimulus plans being "the road to hell."

Many view the no confidence vote as a rebuttal of Topolánek's handling of the economy, especially in his role as rotating president of the European Union. Nevertheless, anti-militarist activists around the world who opposed the U.S. radar base welcomed his ouster.

Topolánek had already pulled back on a vote on the planned U.S. radar treaty out of fear that the opposition Communists and Social Democrats would vote it down in parliament. Topolánek had been a strong supporter of a Bush administration plan to deploy a missile defense system in Europe that would essentially threaten Russia. The Czech Republic was to host U.S. missile defense radar as part of that plan.

U.S. troops would have to be stationed on Czech soil to operate the radar base. That point in particular has been a lightning rod for criticism.

Czech hostility to the radar runs deep. Polls show some two-thirds of Czechs have consistently opposed it since the plan was first introduced in 2006. Czech groups such as the No Bases Initiative played an active role in opposing the radar for more than two years.

U.S. groups such as the International Action Center and the Campaign for Peace and Democracy (CPD) have supported the Czech anti-radar movement. The CPD has opposed the radar base with public statements, open letters, demonstrations and

owned economy.

Speakers at the tenth anniversary rally praised Milosevic for his refusal of the International Monetary Fund's neoliberal demand to restructure this multinational sovereign nation's economy by privatizing and opening it to imperialist penetration.

Speakers stressed the deterioration of social conditions since socialist Yugoslavia has been broken up into six republics. Funding for schools, hospitals, museums, parks and other public resources has been cut, while a blatant and corrupt market economy has emerged.

Where once bookstores and cafes dotted the graceful city, McDonald's and Pizza Huts multiply. Coca-Cola signs and crass billboards depicting women as sex objects now proliferate across Belgrade's cityscape. Speakers at the rally condemned the vulgar materialism and growing unemployment of the new market economy.

In socialist Yugoslavia, millions in the working class were able to develop in all cultural and intellectual areas. Still now taxi drivers and seamstresses discuss history and philosophy, people in the public markets play chess and quote poetry. Most people say that life in socialist Yugoslavia was superior to life under neoliberal capitalism.

Cottin represented the International Action Center at the 10th anniversary events.

hunger strikes.

The Bush plan intended to complement the Czech radar base with 10 missile interceptors in Poland. The planned missile defense system follows more than a decade of rapid expansion of the U.S.-dominated NATO military alliance into the former socialist bloc countries of Eastern Europe.

This major setback for the Pentagon's radar plans does not mean that the radar base is completely off the table. It is possible that Topolánek and his Civic Democrats party could retake control in the future. Czech rules allow for the scheduling of early elections if three attempts to form a new majority coalition in the parliament fail.

It is possible that Topolánek could prevail at the polls in that event. But the former prime minister has an uphill battle. Many ordinary Czechs oppose his response to the economic crisis and his support of the radar base.

It has been difficult to get a clear read of the position of President Barack Obama's administration on the plans to put these missile bases in Eastern Europe. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton recently sought to reassure the Polish government that the U.S. government would continue to press for NATO expansion in Poland. Clinton refused to state a clear position on the Obama administration's missile defense plans.

NATO's expansion and the planned missile defense system are part of Washington's drive to isolate Russia and prevent Moscow from forming a rival economic or military bloc in Europe, even a capitalist bloc. NATO's presence is also intended to support the pro-capitalist, rightist regimes, which are beginning to arouse working-class resentment at the loss of jobs and social benefits. □

Cuba cambia, pero no según el guión de los EEUU

Por Deirdre Griswold

En la enorme red de espionaje de los EEUU, sin duda alguna hay salones enteros, quizás hasta edificios enteros de “expertos” cuya tarea es la de analizar lo que está pasando en Cuba. Estudian toda clase de datos, algunos publicados abiertamente por el gobierno cubano, otros proporcionados, o mejor dicho vendidos por contrarrevolucionarios cultivados por diplomáticos o agentes estadounidenses.

Pero estos expertos no solo analizan. Su objetivo es el de intentar encontrar resquicios en el blindaje de ese extraordinario país socialista con la esperanza de un día devolverlo al “mundo libre”, que significa el mundo que ha sido “abierto” como una lata de sardinas para ser explotado libremente por las corporaciones y los bancos de los EEUU.

Considerando la cantidad de dinero que EEUU gasta en su guerra abierta y encubierta contra Cuba, debe ser bastante embarazoso que sus predicciones siempre resulten equivocadas. Juzgando por las declaraciones de oficiales del gobierno de los EEUU y sus cotorras en los medios de comunicación corporativos, la Revolución Cubana debía haber sido derrocada hace décadas.

Cuando Cuba perdió sus principales socios económicos con el colapso de la Unión Soviética y los estados del Este de Europa, estos expertos se regocijaron

diciendo que Cuba sería la próxima víctima. Establecieron un fondo encabezado por Jeb Bush, que recaudó por lo menos \$10 miles de millones de aquellas personas que invertirían en lo que pronto sería una Cuba capitalista. Aquellos inversionistas desilusionados deben estar bastante enojados con Bush hoy. ¿Qué pasó con ese dinero?

Cuba pasó por un período extremadamente difícil a comienzos de los años 90 cuando hizo ajustes penosos a su economía. Su PNB se redujo enormemente. Había todo tipo de escasez. Pero no hubo ninguna rebelión ni represión de las masas — como hubiera pasado en cualquier otro país. El pueblo sabía que l@s líderes cuban@s estaban compartiendo con ellos las mismas dificultades y que su sistema socialista era justo, a pesar de las pesadas circunstancias. No le echaron la culpa de los problemas a l@s líderes. Tod@s trabajaron junt@s para que el país pudiera funcionar bien nuevamente. Se conducían debates democráticos sobre qué hacer en todas las organizaciones de masa.

Cuando Fidel Castro, cuya vida está estrechamente entrelazada a la revolución cubana, se enfermó hace algunos pocos años, hubo otro torrente de predicciones surgiendo del coloso imperialista del norte. Dijeron que se había muerto. Que no se murió pero que no iba a sobrevivir. O que sobreviviría pero sin ninguna capacidad mental. Y que la revolución no

duraría sin Fidel.

El mes pasado Fidel se reunió con la presidenta de Chile quien estaba de visita en La Habana. Las fotos en la prensa cubana la mostraron con un Fidel más delgado pero de pie, erguido y alto. Sus columnas regulares en el periódico Granma son prueba de su agudo interés en todo lo que sucede, aunque ha renunciado a sus puestos oficiales a causa de su estado físico.

Los rumores más recientes que han corrido en los medios masivos estadounidenses dicen que la reorganización de algunos sectores del gobierno cubano y la sustitución de algunos oficiales muy conocidos prueban que la revolución y el Partido Comunista tienen problemas.

Por supuesto, si tod@s l@s líderes del gobierno se hubieran quedado en sus puestos, éstos lo hubieran criticado como una muestra de que Cuba estaba osificada, burocrática, etc. De cualquier forma, la máquina propagandística del hostil e imperialista Estados Unidos, produciría su propio “análisis”.

El anuncio de los cambios llegó en un mensaje oficial del Consejo de Estado. Decía que después de que las propuestas fueron presentadas a la legislatura cubana, conocida como Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, estableciendo que “se requiere una estructura más compacta y funcional, con menor número de organismos de la administración central del Estado y una mejor distribución de

las funciones que cumplen”, el Consejo de Estado estuvo de acuerdo en reorganizar unas agencias y trasladar cuadros a sectores diferentes de responsabilidad. (Granma, 2 de marzo)

Presentó entonces una lista de los cambios incluyendo los nombres de las personas que iban a removerse y las que les iban a reemplazar.

Al otro día en su columna, Fidel Castro dijo que le habían consultado sobre los cambios, aunque las personas en los puestos de gobierno no tenían la obligación de hacer eso porque “renuncié hace rato a las prerrogativas del poder”. Eso fue una respuesta a los enemigos de Cuba que estaban tratando de ponerle a él y a su reputación en contra de sus camaradas que ahora gobiernan el estado.

Los medios masivos estadounidenses no han prestado mucha atención al hecho de que tres de las personas que ahora dirigen ministerios son mujeres, y que dos de estas mujeres rempazan a hombres. Una de ellas, María del Carmen Concepción González, dirigirá el nuevo Ministerio de la Industria Alimenticia, la cual fusiona dos ministerios que antes estaban separados — alimenticio y pesquero y que estaban dirigidos por hombres.

El Consejo de Estado dice que “continuará estudiando la actual estructura del Gobierno con el objetivo de reducir gradualmente su envergadura y elevar su eficacia”. □

Desastre global: China e India por diferentes senderos

Por David Hoskins

El Fondo Monetario Internacional ha revisado su pronóstico para el 2009 proyectando la primera contracción económica global en 60 años. Las cifras revisadas del FMI estiman que la economía del mundo se reducirá hasta un punto porcentual este año. Las economías avanzadas se esperan que caigan en más de un 3%. La profunda recesión en los países desarrollados se espera que continúe todo el año a pesar de las enormes sumas que se han gastado en los esfuerzos de estímulos fiscales.

El FMI predecía tan reciente como en enero de este año que la economía global crecería un 0,5%. La aguda revisión refleja la gran velocidad con la que el desastre ha tomado a los capitalistas de sorpresa. El FMI es el campeón de la globalización imperialista. Es muy posible que los estimados del declive del 1% continúen minimizando la severidad de la crisis.

Aunque se proyecta que las economías en desarrollo continúen su crecimiento en el 2009, su tasa de crecimiento ha sido impactada por la recesión global. El Banco Mundial recientemente redujo sus proyecciones para el 2009 sobre el crecimiento de la economía de China, de un 7,5% a un 6,5%. La mayoría de l@s economistas también ha recortado de manera significativa sus proyecciones para la India.

La Unidad de Inteligencia del Economista ha estimado que China e India son dos de solo 4 países asiáticos

que se espera expandan en el 2009. La economía del Japón por el contrario, se espera que baje hasta en un 5,8%.

Senderos diferentes en tiempos buenos y malos

Un reciente artículo por Somini Sengupta titulado “Mientras el crecimiento indio aumenta, el hambre infantil persiste,” examinó los resultados divergentes que el crecimiento económico ha tenido en India y China. (New York Times, 13 de marzo) Aún después de una década de un espectacular crecimiento económico, las tasas de malnutrición infantil en la India son peores que en muchos países africanos. Indicadores como éstos comienzan a pintar una imagen del crecimiento en la India que es totalmente diferente que al de China, su país vecino.

Más del 42% de l@s niñ@s indi@s por debajo de los 5 años sufren de malnutrición. India es un país de bajos ingresos donde el 80% de su población sobrevive con menos de \$2 al día. El 39% de la población no puede leer o escribir y la mortandad infantil es de 32 muertes por cada 1.000 nacimientos con vida.

En China solo el 7% de sus infantes/as menores de 5 años están bajo peso. La proporción de su población sobreviviendo con menos de \$2 al día ha sido disminuida al 35%. El país casi ha logrado alfabetismo universal. Su tasa de mortandad infantil es de 21 muertes por cada 1.000 nacimientos con vida.

¿Qué explica esta diferencia en el bien-

estar popular en dos de las poderosas economías emergentes en Asia?

Las condiciones reflejan la historia

China e India tienen mucho en común. Los dos países tienen largas historias, están separadas por una frontera común y tienen una población que excede a los mil millones.

Sin embargo, estos dos países tienen diferentes historias políticas y su actual liderazgo político y método de organización económica son fundamentalmente diferentes. El New York Times da señal de esto, aún mientras salpica su examen de China con las habituales alegaciones e insinuaciones que la prensa estadounidense reserva para cualquier tipo de gobierno izquierdista y antiimperialista.

China ha sido más exitosa en reducir la pobreza infantil y el hambre por la eficiencia de su estado centralizado y por el firme liderazgo del Partido Comunista de China. El liderazgo del PCC ha permitido a China utilizar las características socialistas del estado chino para elevar la calidad de vida de l@s niñ@s, aún después de tres décadas de arriesgadas experimentaciones con las reformas de mercado.

El poder del PCC está enraizado en la Guerra Popular para la Liberación encabezada por el partido y su Ejército Rojo. El PCC asumió el poder después de primero expulsar las fuerzas de ocupación japonesas y luego derrotar decisivamente a los ejércitos aliados a los EEUU de

Chang Kai-shek.

El presidente del PCC Mao Tse-tung, declaró en el acto de fundación de la República Popular de China en 1949, que “el pueblo de China, que consta de la cuarta parte de la humanidad, ahora se ha levantado”. China dejó atrás la humillación del colonialismo al asumir el camino independiente del poder de l@s trabajadores/as. La historia revolucionaria de China es evidente hoy mientras avanza contra la pobreza y el sufrimiento del pasado.

La India, por el contrario, está plagada de una burocracia ineficiente y corrupta que en la historia reciente ha estado liderada por el partido burgués Congreso Nacional de la India o por el Partido ultra nacionalista Bharatiya Janata. Ambos partidos representan a los empresarios y terratenientes que oprimen a l@s trabajadores/as y campesin@s de la India. Ambos son aliados estratégicos del imperialismo estadounidense y británico.

La India emergió de casi un siglo entero de dominio directo por la Corona Británica en 1947 cuando Bretaña entregó el poder estatal a la burguesía de la India. Esta transición llegó tras un largo período de lucha encabezada en gran parte por el Congreso Nacional de la India.

El CNI se había convertido en el instrumento principal para la reforma social y la promoción de la independencia. Era un partido burgués cuyo líder Mahatma Gandhi, se opuso a la lucha armada pop-

Continúa a pagina 11